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S E C R E T BUDAPEST 000845

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE MOORE. PASS TO JEFF HOVENIER AT THE NSC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2029

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR NATO AF HU

SUBJECT: HUNGARIAN RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. SECSTATE 120807

1B. NATO 534

1C. BUDAPEST 834

Classified By: Political Officer Jon Martinson, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary. The Charge, accompanied by appropriate action officers, delivered ref A points November 24 to David Koranyi, the Prime Minister's National Security Advisor, Jozsef Bali, MOD Policy State Secretary, and Gabor Iklody, MFA Policy State Secretary. All three officials underscored Hungary's strong public support for the ISAF effort in Afghanistan, which in Koranyi's words "has been obvious from day one." Koranyi and Iklody also highlighted the multi-party political consensus, with their expectation of continued political support even with the anticipated change in government in 2010. While all assured political and public support, all contacts noted that Hungary's ability to substantially increase its physical presence in Afghanistan will be limited by resource constraints. End summary.

12. (S) Referencing NATO Secretary General (SYG) Rasmussen's November 19 visit to Hungary (ref B), Koranyi said that Prime Minister Bajnai is keeping an open mind as to options, but did not commit to specifics, other than a slight increase in the 2010 MOD budget. Koranyi, as well as Bali and Iklody, all mentioned the 2010 budget cuts - approximately USD 150 million for the MOD - as the most serious issue in determining increased GOH support in Afghanistan. Referring to the SYG's call for an additional 500 Hungarian soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan (ref B) as high "stakes at the poker table," Iklody said that the GOH will have to work on different options, stating "it is not just size that matters, but quality as well." Bali was more direct, commenting that "it would be a miracle if we could add 500 additional soldiers...with a one-to-three rotational base it just doesn't work."

13. (S) Continuing, Bali referred to the SYG's letter to the Prime Minister on November 20, which calls for additional forces in Afghanistan. Bali outlined Hungary's commitment to the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan with combat helicopter training, engineers for the Afghan Engineering school in Region North, the deployment of two MI-17 helicopters with 30-35 personnel once the helicopters are refurbished, and the extension of the SOF contingent that will be publicly announced in late December. Bali reconfirmed that the MOD will delay the deployment of a second Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) from 2010 to 2011 due to budget reductions (ref C). He suggested that a joint OMLT patterned after the currently deployed Ohio National Guard/Hungarian Military OMLT would decrease the Hungarian personnel requirement by 50 percent, facilitating the MOD's ability to

make the second OMLT a reality.

¶4. (C) Iklody said that he looks forward to the U.S. strategy, commenting that the EU AFPAK concept was created in a vacuum and a new "transformation strategy" is important. He also noted the EU's frustration with the performance of the Afghan government. Iklody said that Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defense Minister, and the Chief of Defense will be meeting this week to seek ways to make Hungary's contribution more valuable. Iklody suggested that the GOH should consider adjusting its presence in Afghanistan to follow closely the U.S. capacity-building strategy. He also raised two areas that he believes need to be addressed: the PRT concept, which may not be as effective as it was in the past, and lack of coordination between donors, which diminishes effectiveness.

¶5. (S) Comment. Based on the discussions with the Hungarian interlocutors, we anticipate continued GOH public support for ISAF mission. However, the Hungarian's ability to increase troop levels above the total 450 projected for 2010 (ref C) is significantly hampered by the current budget crisis. Post echoes USNATO's suggestion that Washington consider steps to help support additional Hungarian contributions (ref B). End comment.

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